

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CASCADE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD



PHOTO TAKEN BY: KEVIN NURRE

**PREPARED BY:**  
CASCADE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
121 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET NORTH, SUITE 2H/I  
GREAT FALLS, MT 59401  
(406) 454-6905

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

---

<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CERTIFICATES OF SURVEY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PLAT ROOM</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PLATS FILED IN 2020</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SUBDIVISION ACTIVITY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>COMMUNITY DECAY, LITTER, &amp; JUNK VEHICLE ORDINANCES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>COUNTY ZONING</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PLANNING BOARD</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>FLOODPLAIN REGULATIONS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>FY2021 BUDGET</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>FY2021 STRATEGIC PLAN &amp; GOALS</b>	<b>17</b>

## BACKGROUND

---

The Bylaws adopted by the Cascade County Planning Board provide that the Annual Meeting shall be held for the purpose of electing officers, receiving annual reports of officer, staff, committees, and for such business that may arise. This Annual Report is prepared in response to that requirement.

On October 10, 1973, the Board of Cascade County Commissioners passed a *Resolution of Intention* to create the Cascade County Planning Board. Following a public hearing and receiving no protests, the final *Resolution* forming the Cascade County Planning Board was passed on November 19, 1973. On January 22, 1974, the Cascade County Planning Board held their first meeting. The Board has continued to meet regularly since that time.

The Cascade County Development Plan was adopted by the Cascade County Commission in 1979, amended in 1982, 1998 and 2006. In 2014, the Commissioners adopted an updated Cascade County Growth Policy which had been significantly rewritten. Population trends, economic conditions, and local services showed a positive trend for growth in Cascade County. Two new sections were added under Conditional Development Areas called the Military Height Zones Conditional Development Areas and the Military Runway Accident Potential Zones. Details about developing in these areas are covered in the Cascade County Zoning Regulations.

In 2003, the State of Montana Legislature amended the laws regarding development plans. Through the passing of Senate Bill 326, all governing bodies that had a development plan were allowed to revise it following the procedures set out in Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6, of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA). The Cascade County Growth Policy was formally adopted in September of 2006 by *Resolution #06-66* after an extensive public process, and updated in May of 2014 by *Resolution #14-45*.

The Cascade County Growth Policy is a living document that is reviewed and updated periodically in order to address changes within the community that may alter guide to address the community needs and direction that the Board of County Commissioners want to implement and protect. Generally, these plans are updated every five years. In 2019 the Planning Board reviewed the *Growth Policy* per statutory requirements and ultimately decided to leave the document unchanged pending obtaining 2020 Census data. The Census Bureau is currently processing the 2020 Census data.

The Cascade County Planning Division and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Division functioned under the purview of the Public Works Department from 2010 to 2019. In 2019, they were reorganized under the Board of County Commissioners as the Planning Department and the GIS Department.

## CERTIFICATES OF SURVEY

Of our many customer services, one of the less noticeable responsibilities of the Cascade County Planning Department is the review of Certificates of Surveys and Plats. Under the provisions outlined in Title 76, Chapter 3, Montana Code Annotated, certain divisions and aggregations of land are exempt from subdivision review, but are subject to the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act's surveying requirements. These typically include, lot aggregations, boundary line adjustments, family conveyances, the creation of tracts to be used for agricultural purposes, etc. A review of each proposed Certificate of Survey is conducted weekly. The pandemic resulted in this in-person meeting going to an email-based review with members from the City-County Health Department, the Clerk & Recorder's Office, and the Planning Department, as well as the City of Great Falls' Planners when available or necessary. Time is spent reviewing the exempted Certificates of Surveys and Plats, and providing guidance to surveyors on the use of MSPA exemptions prior to filing.

In 2020, there were fifty-one (51) Certificates of Surveys filed: six (6) were in the City of Great Falls and the other forty-five (45) were in Cascade County.

Category	Number of Surveys Filed in County
Boundary Line Adjustment (76-3-207(1)(a,d,e))	23
Court Ordered (76-3-201(1)(a))	1
Divided by County Road	0
Create Public Utility Site	0
Agricultural Exemption (76-3-201(1)(b))	1
Family Conveyance (76-3-207(1)(b))	8
Correction of Errors	1
Easement Creation	0
Mortgage	0
Parcels over 20 acres	0
Cemetery	0
Retracement of Existing Parcel	10
Aggregation of Lots (76-3-207(1)(f))	1
<b>Total COS Filed in 2020</b>	<b>51</b>
City of Great Falls	6
Cascade County	45

## PLAT ROOM

---

Thirty-eight (38) Plats were cataloged and recorded in our files by our Mapping Technician, Greg Avent, for both the City of Great Falls and Cascade County. Of the twenty-five (25) *Plats* filed in the County, there were five (5) boundary line adjustments, six (6) aggregation of lots, seven (7) minor subdivisions, four (4) major subdivision plats, and three (3) boundary retracements. These represent all the activity within Cascade County, including the incorporated areas outside of Great Falls. The City of Great Falls filed thirteen (13) Plats in 2020. The plat room material has been helpful to people of many walks of life, including landowners, potential land buyers, realtors, title companies, surveyors, consultants, researchers.

Not only are there maps but there are also old records of rights-of-way, aerial photos over time, and corner recordation for locations of surveyor pins. With our resources on hand, we are able to reproduce in a large format and electronically many of these items upon request.

### PLATS FILED IN 2020

---

Category	Number of Plats Filed in County
Aggregate Lots (76-3-207(1)(f))	6
Utility Sites	0
Relocation of Common Boundary Lines (76-3-207(1)(a,d,e))	5
Remove Ag. Covenant	0
Retrace Boundary	3
Major Subdivision	4
Minor Subdivision	7
Discontinuation of Street or Alley	0
<b>Plats Filed in 2020</b>	<b>38</b>
Cascade County	25
City of Great Falls	13

## SUBDIVISION ACTIVITY

Subdivision activity can often go unnoticed in the actual amount of time and preparation that is spent on proposals that never come to fruition. A pre-application meeting is held for each of the proposed subdivisions with the developer, surveyor, engineer, sanitarians representing the City-County Health Department, and Planners. Time is spent reviewing the proposed projects and providing developers with information pertinent to their plans. The following numbers do not begin to reflect those meetings since many do not go forward with their project. Pre-application

meeting have been held via Zoom and in-person this year.

Year	# of Minor	# of Major	Total Lots
2002	4	0	30
2003	4	4	138
2004	8	6	94
2005	21	3	98
2006	11	10	136
2007	15	14	275
2008	6	9	174
2009	4	5	63
2010	6	2	39
2011	10	2	84
2012	6	2	60
2013	2	3	49
2014	5	0	12
2015	3	0	10
2016	3	1	32
2017	5	1	23
2018	3	2	51
2019	8	3	
2020	2	1	81

Minor subdivisions (creating five lots or fewer) and major subdivisions (creating six lots or more) are reviewed by the Department. After review, the proposed subdivision is presented to the Planning Board for their recommendations to the Board of Cascade County Commissioners for preliminary approval. Once the Commissioners approve the preliminary plat, the developer must satisfy any conditions set forth by the Commissioners prior to obtaining final plat approval.

With these subdivision regulations, a much more thorough review for each application is necessary than in years past. This review requires more time and research to make sure that the process and application is comprehensive. It necessitates additional requirements on the developer as well, which generates further questions for the Department. Two minor subdivisions reached Final

Plat approval and were filed, as well as one major subdivisions. The Department has four (4) pending Subdivision Application submitted in 2020.

## COMMUNITY DECAY, LITTER, & JUNK VEHICLES ORDINANCES

In September of 1985, the Cascade County Commissioners adopted a County Community Decay Ordinance. The program that developed around the ordinance is one that works to maintain standards of appearance, and removal of blight and decay in the county. The Commissioners originally placed the program in the City-County Health Department Solid Waste Division.

In 2007, the Solid Waste Division was transferred under the oversight of the former Road Department. In August of 2008, the Solid Waste Division was privatized and the Community Decay Ordinance and a newly created Littering Ordinance were put under the Planning Department for administration and compliance.

A Code Compliance Officer was hired in October of this years, who is tasked with administering and enforcing the Community Decay, including the Motor Vehicle Disposal Program, and Litter Ordinance. Numerous citizen complaints have been received on new, reoccurring, and unresolved issues. Community outreach has resulted in additional citizen inquiries and use of the free junk vehicle disposal program in the County.

YEAR	COMPLAINTS FIELD INSPECTED	WARNING LETTERS	NOTICE OF VIOLATION	VERIFIED COMPLIANCE
2010		37	6	31
2011	120	51	14	37
2012	150	19	6	15
2013	135	17	18	17
2014	128	9	8	20
2015	90	40	9	29
2016	84	39	5	35
2017	82	43	15	29
2018	91	65	10	39
2019	64	43	5	39
2020	48	15	23	18

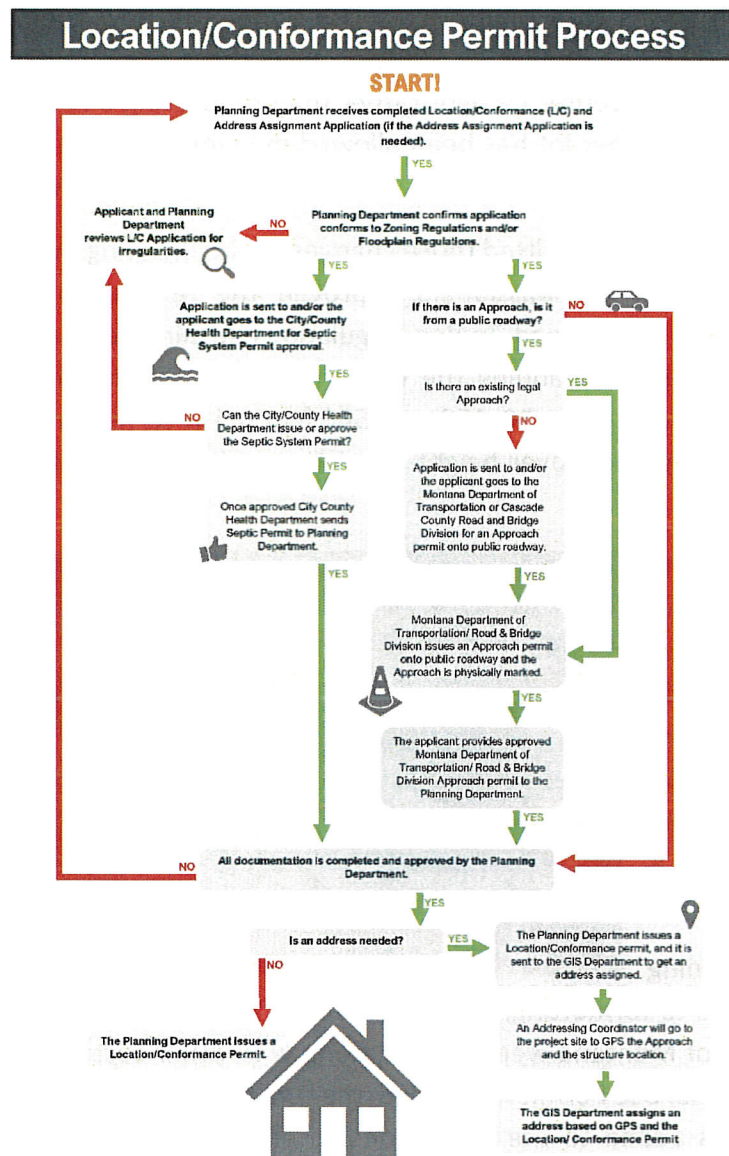
In 2014, there were some changes in the process that were implemented to the Junk Vehicle Program. That year, Cascade County abandoned the “graveyard” site for junk vehicles and implemented a “direct haul” contract. The graveyard was cleaned and cleared of contaminated soil. The direct haul contract is a way to eliminate the graveyards or junk vehicle holding facilities. When a release of ownership in a motor vehicle form is received by the Motor Vehicle Disposal Program and verified it is a junk vehicle as defined under the law, the contracted hauler is contacted to have the junk vehicle immediately hauled to a Motor Vehicle Wrecking Facility

In 2020, there were approximately forty-eight (48) Complaints submitted to the Planning Department relating to junk vehicles and community decay issues. Of those, eighteen (18) were resolved and eight (8) were referred to the Cascade County Attorney's Office or the Sheriff's Office for further criminal investigation and/or prosecution, and the rest remain pending. A more thorough tracking system was implemented to assist in tracking and following a standardize process. Once a Citizen Complaint is received by the Department, an investigation into the alleged violations typically begins with the Code Compliance Officer conducting a site visit from the public right-of-way, taking pictures, and gathering any other relevant documentation. If a violation is determined a Notice of Violation letter is sent to the property owner. Throughout this process, the Department keeps the Complainants informed of the status of their Complaints and works with the property owner to resolve any issues.

We have seen the number of junk vehicles turned over to the Junk Vehicle Program continue to decrease over the last couple of years. As long as the vehicles are being removed, it will continue to benefit the community. In FY2020, there were four (4) junk vehicles turned over to the County that were hauled directly to Pacific Steel and Recycling for disposal. By December of 2020, there was already fifteen (15) junk vehicles collected via direct haul.



## COUNTY ZONING



The County Planning Department regulates all zoning activity in the County exclusive of the incorporated communities of Belt, Cascade, Great Falls, and Neihart. The zoning regulations use a hybrid of the former zoning regulations, along with a permitting system to verify that new projects meet the appropriate land use and development standards. The zoning jurisdictional area was created by the Board of Cascade County Commissioners on April 26, 2005, by *Resolution #05-018*. The Cascade County Zoning Regulations were thereafter revised in 2007, 2009, 2012, twice in 2016, 2017, and 2018, in an effort to clarify definitions, zoning processes, and introduce new permits or uses in accordance with community development trends. The 2020 revisions are likely to be approved by the Commissioners upon completion of the pending protest period.

### Fees

Fees remained the same in 2018. The fees have not been changed since 2007 when some of the zoning application fees were revised to reflect the actual costs of staff processing times and legal notices. These changes were adopted by the County Commissioners on October 23, 2007, after much discussion with the public, staff and the planning board. Fee adjustment is likely to be a topic of discussion this year to incorporate survey review and determination requests.

## Revisions

In 2009, staff undertook re-writing and updating the zoning regulations. Many work sessions were conducted as well as a survey with the owners of those properties that would be affected by a change within the unincorporated towns to a Multi/Mixed Use Zone. The new zoning regulations were adopted by Resolution 09-82 on August 25, 2009, allowing those communities to support a local business in their town's hub center by right rather than requesting a special use permit. Allowing a second (2<sup>nd</sup>) residence per lot has been allowed in some zone districts where they can meet health department requirements as well as setbacks in their zone district.

In 2012, staff refined the zoning regulations and submitted those changes to the Planning Board for review. On December 18, 2012, County Commissioners approved the revised zoning regulations. These changes combined the Flood Road Zoning Regulations within the county regulations rather than a separate document and adding the Military Overlay District which places height limitations for building construction over 50, 150, and 500 feet tall in certain areas. A variance may be necessary if there are conflicts over height restrictions within the Military Overlay District.

County Departments work together to facilitate effective communication. We closely work with the City-County Health Department – Environmental Division, the Public Works Road and Bridge Division, the MS4 Stormwater Runoff Coordinator, and GIS Department. This holistic approach helps assist citizens and the County in ensuring proper permitting is occurring throughout the County.



In 2016, the Cascade County Zoning Regulations were revised with corrections to formatting, making sure that the Montana Codes Annotated and the Administrative Rules of Montana were correct along with other sections of the Zoning Regulations. A new type of Special Use Permit was added, the Unclassified Use Permit. The Unclassified Use Permit Section was added to the regulations to allow uses possessing characteristics of such unique and special forms that each use shall be considered as an individual case regardless of their underlying zone district. The new regulations were adopted by the Cascade County Commission on June 14, 2016. The first UUP Applications were for proposed solar power plants on five (5) separate parcels in 2016.

In 2017, zoning regulations were revised to match changes in state laws regarding medical marijuana and definitions added to clarify language. Uses were added to the uses permitted with a Special Use Permit in an Agricultural district. Additionally, in 2020, our office processed four (4) re-zoning applications, two (2) of which were withdrawn or voided. The Department also process one text/map amendment that was initiated by the County Commissioners to rezone a

number of parcels around and including the Rainbow Dam property from Open Space to Agricultural.

The 2021 Cascade County Zoning Regulations will be finalized at the beginning of the year after a lengthy review process. Those revisions focus on creating the Mixed Use – 20 District, which was carved out of the Agricultural District along major transportation and amenity corridors. The revised Agricultural District was also revised to strengthen protection and preservation of agricultural lands and uses to reflect uses incidental to agricultural production and rural residential living characteristic of traditional farming and ranching. The Black Eagle Area was also rezoned to Mixed Use from Urban Residential and Commercial for the purpose of bring historical uses in the area into conformance and encouraging similar development in the area to continue and grow. Many definitions were updated to reflect changes in the law and the times. While medical marijuana land uses were discussed in detail, the only resulting revision to the Regulations was a decrease in the setback requirement from 1000 feet to 500 feet in accordance with State licensing requirements and to decrease development restrictions for such uses in the Heavy Industrial District. A photo contest was held to celebrate the completion of this particular public process. The winner’s photograph will be featured on the cover of the new revised Zoning Regulations, while the second and third place winners’ photographs will be placed inside.

### Permitting

Location/Conformance (L/C) Permits are issued for structures prior to construction on parcels throughout the County. These permits are issued once the location of all structures and the conformance of the structures with the Zoning Regulations have been met. Despite COVID-19 in 2020 and a Department shut down, two hundred and sixty-six (266) permits were received, and two hundred and fifty (250) permits were approved, up sixty-six (66) permits from the previous year.

2020 Permits/Approvals				
Permit/Approval Category	Number of Applications Received	Number of Permits/ Approvals	Permit Applications Pending	Number of Permits Not Issued
L/C Permits	266	250*	36	2
Firework Permits	24	23	0	1
Special Use Permits	22	11	11	0
Floodplain Permits	15	8	7	0
Road Abandonment	6	3	3	0
Unclassified Use Permit	0	0	0	0
*Includes permits approved for application submitted in the previous year.				

Special Use Permits are processed by our office. A new permit was introduced in the 2016 Zoning Regulation titled "Unclassified Use Permit." Unclassified Use Permits require extra analysis as the use may be contentious. The permit process also requires a public hearing to be held. Special Use Permit and Unclassified Use Permit public hearings are held before the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBOA). The ZBOA conducts a public hearing to hear the Staff Report which presents the application materials; listen to the Applicant's proposal; listen to proponents and opponents of the proposal; and then approve the application, deny the application, or approve the application with conditions. This year, staff received twenty-two (22) Special Use Permit Applications were received.

Fireworks Permits are required for selling fireworks in the county during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and year end celebrations in December, and reviewed and issued by the Planning Department. The Department conducts an on-site inspection for each firework stand prior to issuing the permit. In 2020, twenty-three (23) permits were issued for the sale of fireworks, down five (5) from the previous year.

## **ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

---

The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBOA) is a five member board that makes decisions on Special Use Permits, Unclassified Use Permits, Variances, and Appeals of the Zoning Administrator's decisions. A public hearing is scheduled when an application is received, deemed complete by Planning staff, and all notifications have been completed. The members are appointed by the County Commissioners.

There were three (3) variance requests in addition to the Special Use Permits.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBOA) had two positions that expired at the end of December, 2019. The commissioners reappointed two members.

The 2020 Zoning Board of Adjustment members were:

1. Charles Kuether, term to expire 12/31/21;
2. Michele Levine, resigned 11/06/20;
3. Bill Austin, term expired 12/31/20;
4. Leonard Reed, term expired 12/31/20; and
5. Rob Skawinski, term expired 12/31/20.

The four (4) open positions for the ZBOA remain to be filled pending Commission appointment.

## PLANNING BOARD

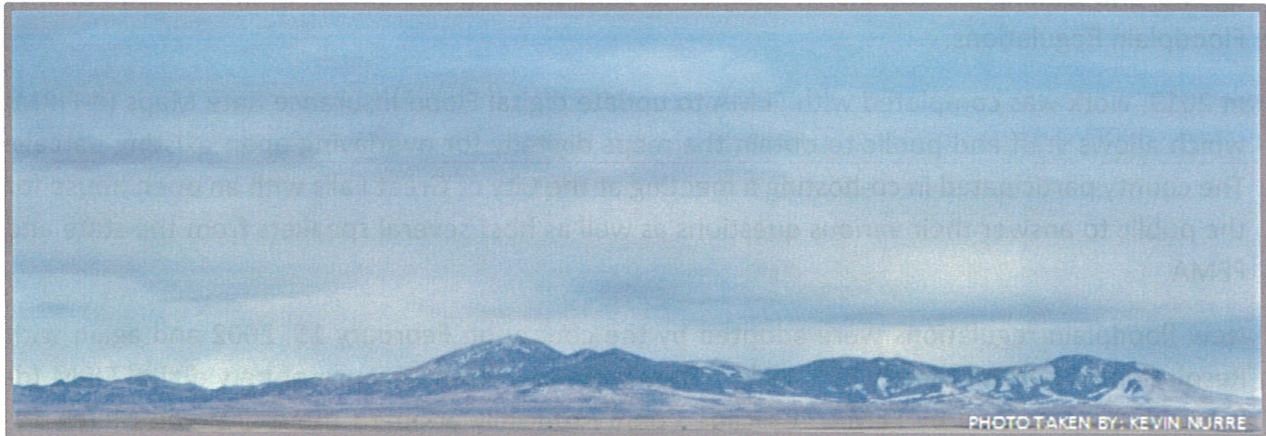
---

The Cascade County Planning Board serves in an advisory capacity to presently established boards and officials. Planning Board members are appointed by the county commissioners for a two-year term. County policy generally limits board members to three consecutive two-year terms.

The 2020 Planning Board members are:

1. Elliot Merja, indefinite;
2. Dexter Busby, term to expire 12/31/2021;
3. Dan Johnstone, term to expire 12/31/2021;
4. Bruce Moore, term to expire in 12/31/2021;
5. Ken Thornton, term to expire 12/31/2020;
6. Richard Liebert, term to expire 12/31/2020; and
7. Rob Skawinski, term to expire 12/31/2020.

The three (3) open positions for the Planning Board will be filled pending Commission appointment.



## FLOODPLAIN REGULATIONS

---

On February 15, 1980, the Cascade County Planning Department began to administer floodplain regulations within its jurisdictional area. In January of 1984, the Planning Director was designated Floodplain Administrator for all of the unincorporated areas of Cascade County. Changes in federal and state laws required that local floodplain regulations be amended in 1991 and March 12, 2013. The regulations, which took effect in 2013, increased the Floodplain Permit fees from \$100.00 to \$250.00 due to the increased workload caused by the amendments.

In 1991, Cascade County was one of only a few Montana communities that was accepted into the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS) program. As a result, Cascade County citizens required to purchase flood insurance receive a 10% reduction in those insurance rates. The CRS Program requires renewal



annually. As part of our participation in the program, the Department continues to provide assistance on floodplain matters to the general public, real estate agents, appraisers, insurance agents, and lending institutions, in addition to administering and enforcing the Cascade County Floodplain Regulations.

In 2013, work was completed with FEMA to update digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (d-FIRM) which allows staff and public to obtain the maps digitally for overlaying upon existing parcels. The county participated in co-hosting a meeting at the City of Great Falls with an open house for the public to answer their various questions as well as host several speakers from the state and FEMA.

New floodplain regulations were adopted by the county on February 15, 2002 and again with Resolution# 13-19 on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013. They were rewritten because of new digital FIRM (d-firms) maps produced by FEMA. Cascade County officially adopted the d-firms on March 19, 2013.

We have been using a GIS program with zoning and flood layers which has simplified our work efforts when determining zoning and floodplain status. The GIS Department combined the zoning maps with flood zone overlay maps which has helped make our work much more accurate. He also helped with the CRS site visit by mapping open spaces and low-density zoned areas within the county.

FEMA has also begun offering the 100-year floodplain maps to the public with a KML file that opens within the computer application Google Earth. Now anyone with access to a computer can download the files from FEMA's website and see which parcels the floodplain covers throughout the USA. The Department installed these layers on Google Earth and use them in combination with the paper maps in our filing system.

The 2018 year was an active year as far as flooding in our area. The emergency operations center (EOC) was activated in anticipation of flooding events along the Sun, Missouri, and Dearborn rivers as a result of runoff from near record levels of snowpack in the mountains.

Both the 2019 and 2020 year was less severe than 2018, but had typical flooding issues along the Sun River during the spring runoff period.

The previous flooding event in 2011 saw the



Sun River, the Missouri, Belt Creek, and the Sand Coulee in particular cause havoc in their respective areas. Areas in and around Great Falls, Belt, and Sun River were especially hit hard. In a matter of days, the floods were very wide spread because of the flat topography. Many people scrambled to get insurance to only find there was a waiting period of 30 days before they were insured! Our staff was part of those in the community documenting the extent of the flooding. In our office, we have more than one hundred photos of the damage and extent of the flooding. Hundreds of miles were traveled accessing and documenting the damage by the flooding event.

The Department currently has two Certified Floodplain Managers (CFM). In 2021, the Department plans to certify three additional employees as Certified Floodplain Managers. Having employees with CFM certification allows the planning Department to provide a greater level of support when navigating floodplain permitting and regulations. The value of learning about flood issues throughout the United States is hard to place a price on. The lessons of Hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, Harvey, and other areas affected by flooding, show the value of the floodplain permitting process.

Our levee systems protect several areas that fall within the jurisdiction of the City of Great Falls, Cascade County, and the levee districts such as Vaughn and Sun River. In the past, the Army Corps of Engineers would re-certify and stand behind the integrity of the levees and certify that

they have met and continue to meet current standards for certification. A meeting was held in Glasgow, Montana, in 2015, to discuss the status of levees throughout the state. FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers had representatives at the meeting to discuss re-certification of the levees and answer questions. It was a great opportunity to learn firsthand the status of levees in Montana and how to recertify the levees for the interest of our community members.

We continue to see the community members apply for Floodplain Permits. In 2020, the County



received eight (15) Floodplain Permit Applications, eight (8) were approved, zero (0) were denied, and seven (7) remain pending. Inspections are done before and after for confirmation of compliance to their Floodplain Permits. Our office is able to assist property owners, realtors, lenders, and insurance agents with their flooding issues, such as providing Base Flood Elevations, and if flood insurance would be required.

Every five (5) years the County's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System (CRS) is evaluated and rated

based upon activities completed by the county. Between 2016 and 2017, the Department worked closely with the State of Montana's Department of Natural Resources' Floodplain Management Program and FEMA's Region VIII offices to ensure the county retained its current rating of an 8 in the CRS program, this rating was recertified in 2020.

## Department Personnel

---

**Charity N. Yonker** joined the Cascade County in 2018 as a Civil Deputy County Attorney and started the Planning Director position in March of 2020 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Charity was born in Ronan, Montana and graduated with a Bachelor's of Science in Anthropology, with a minor in Linguistics from Western Oregon University. She worked in social services prior to attending the University of Wyoming College of Law. After law school and prior to working for the County, Charity worked in a private law firm in Bozeman litigating civil and criminal cases, and doing business and estate planning. She enjoys traveling, home remodeling projects, and spending time in the great outdoors with her family.

**Greg Avent** has been with Cascade County since October of 1998. He is a Mapping Technician who provides the Planning Department with technical assistance in the areas of cartography, surveying, road construction inspection and approval, floodplain management, computer expertise, and in providing exhibits for staff reports and oral presentations. His past experience

with Montana Department of Transportation has been an asset with his understanding of the road maps, recordation of easements, etc. Greg attended a national floodplain school in Maryland during September of 2003. Greg manages the Plat Room, and his expertise is very

useful to realtors, surveyors, title companies, and attorneys.



**Sandor Hopkins** joined the Planning Department as a Planner in September of 2017. He is a graduate of CMR High School and Montana State University – Bozeman, with a Bachelor's of Arts in Political Science. In his free time, Sandor enjoys camping, hiking, skiing, and travelling across our great state.

**Anna Ehnes** was hired with Cascade County in December of 2017, and is a Planner for the Department. Anna was born and raised in Great Falls, until she went to Missoula to attend the University of Montana. There, she studied Psychology as well as Forensics, receiving her Bachelor's of Arts in May of 2017. In June 2017, she received her Property/Casualty and Life/Health insurance licenses through the State of Montana.

**Amber Hobbs** joined the County as a Planner in March of 2020. She is originally from Maryland but has been able to call the Intermountain West home for almost seven years now. After attending Idaho State University, where she received a Bachelor's degree in Geology with an emphasis in Geographic Information Systems, she completed an internship with NASA DEVELOP where she worked to improve wildfire timing and severity forecasting in the Eastern Great Basin. Amber enjoys working with the community and has an affection for land use planning. With a background in Geology, Amber reveres the Montana backcountry and enjoys hiking, looking for interesting rock formations, and beautiful mountain views.

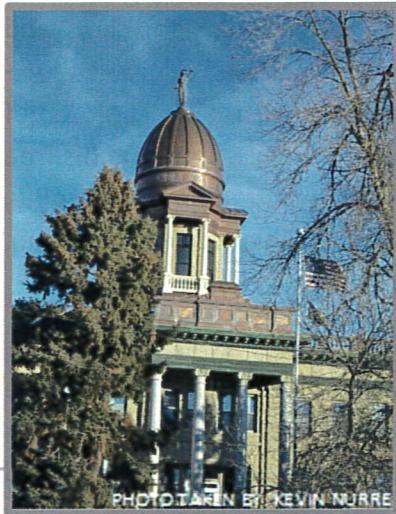
**Kevin Nurre** joined the Planning Department as our Code Compliance Officer in October 2020. He is originally from Iowa and spent 20+ years in the United States Air Force, where he received an Associate's degree in applied science while working as a weather forecaster. He traveled the world living in places like Japan, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia, Honduras, and Afghanistan, finally being stationed at Malmstrom AFB in 2010 and retiring in 2015. Following his retirement, he got a job at the Cascade County Sheriff's Office as a Training Officer, helping train corrections officers and law enforcement both in the County and down in Helena at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy.

**Destiny Gough** joined the Planning Department in December of 2018. She graduated from Great Falls High School in 2012, and graduated from Biola University in Southern California with a

Bachelors' in Fine Arts, Studio Arts in May of 2017. Her artwork has been displayed in several art exhibitions and galleries and is owned by various people around the world. In 2012, she was a part of a nonprofit organization and lived in Gulu, Uganda. Since then, she has been a part of several nonprofit organizations. She uses her background in fine arts and working with several nonprofit organizations to do various tasks for the County as the Planning Department's Administrative Assistant.

## FY2021 BUDGET

---



The Planning Department was provided with an overall operating budget of \$488,943 for FY2021. The Department has six fulltime employees. Notably, a Code Compliance Officer position was added this year and the Planning Director position was filled. The Department will continue reviewing and updating regulations and ordinances, processing land use applications, permits, and Citizen Complaints, conducting enforcement, answering general inquiries regarding zoning and land use, and providing maps and other services.

## FY2021 STRATEGIC PLAN & GOALS

---

For FY2021, the Department will pursue the following strategic plan and goals to increase community resilience, keep up to date with changing times, and to improve public outreach and participation:

- I. Administer and enforce land use regulations and ordinances.
- II. Provide quality public services by offering accurate and timely information.
- III. Review and process development applications and consider their potential impacts to the community at large.
- IV. Increase community outreach by informing citizens of programs and services offered.
- V. Continue to encourage increased citizen engagement into public processes.

The successful administration and enforcement of land use regulations and ordinances starts with a well prepared and trained Department. With the reduced travel options and elimination of almost all in-person trainings in 2020, our Department would strongly benefit from utilizing available training options in 2021, whether they be in person or virtually. It is also our goal to obtain floodplain certifications and maintain on-going floodplain continuing education credits.

Marking completion of over a year-long public process, the pending Cascade County Zoning Regulations revisions are likely to become final at the beginning of this year. The Community Decay and Litter Ordinances are next on the list for revisions. The Department would also like to incorporate the Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulation into the Cascade County Zoning Regulations to help streamline the regulatory process for citizens and the Department.

Over the course of FY2020, an internal tracking and assignments process was implemented for all applications, determinations, and complaints to help ensure all work in the office is distributed appropriately. In FY2021, it is our goal to reduce turnaround times, improve communications, and prevent unnecessary delays in processing.

Moreover, the Planning Department continues to provide planning and land use expertise to the Board of Cascade County Commissioners, the Cascade County Planning Board, the Cascade County Zoning Board of Adjustment, and the citizens of Cascade County. Daily inquiries are received from prospective buyers, current owners, and future developers of property in Cascade County. The Department continues to produce reports that are designed to aid the Boards in making recommendation and taking action.

Further, the County updated its website in 2020 to a platform that is easier for citizens to maneuver and for the Department to utilize more fully. With Covid-19, the Department has continued to publish and post information and materials online to aid in keeping information accessible to the community. All forms are available online and can be submitted to the Department online. In 2021, the Department is hopeful it will be able to receive electronic payments.

Additionally, the Code Compliance Officer recently sent out brochures about our Junk Vehicle Disposal Program. As a result, we have received several inquiries and complaints that will ultimately help keep our community clean and aesthetically pleasing. The Department will continue similar community outreach in FY2021.

The Department will wrap up the photo contest in January 2021. The photo contest resulted in wonderful photo submissions taken in Cascade County and numerous county participants. The winner's photograph will be placed on the revised Cascade County Zoning Regulations to celebrate the completion of that public process in consideration of citizen time and efforts. It is the Department's goal to keep Cascade County citizens better informed and engaged with land use issues that impact our community.

Respectfully submitted,



Charity N. Yonker  
Planning Director

